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THE BLACK GIN

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

J. *Wines* BRUNTON *✓* STEPHENS
"

Author of "THE GODOLPHIN ARABIAN," &c.

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P O E M S .

TO A BLACK GIN.

DAUGHTER of Eve, draw near—I would behold
thee.

Good Life! Could ever arm of man enfold thee!
Did the same Nature that made Phryne mould thee?

Come thou to leeward; for thy balmy presence
Savoureth not a whit of *mille-fleurs*cence:—
My nose is no insentient excrescence.

Thou art not beautiful, I tell thee plainly,
Oh! thou ungainliest of things ungainly;
Who thinks thee less than hideous doats insanely.

Most unæsthetical of things terrestrial,
Hadst thou indeed an origin celestial?—
Thy lineaments are positively bestial!

Yet thou my sister art, the clergy tell me ;
 Though, truth to state, thy brutish looks compel me
 To hope these parsons merely want to *sell* me.

A hundred times and more I've heard and read it ;
 But if Saint Paul himself came down and said it,
 Upon my soul I could not give it credit.

"God's image cut in ebony," says some one ;
 'Tis to be hoped some day thou may'st become one ;
 The present image is a very rum one.

Thy face "the human face divine" ! . . . Oh, Moses !
 Whatever trait divine thy face discloses,
 Some vile Olympian cross-play pre-supposes.

Thy nose appeareth but a transverse section :
 Thy mouth hath no particular direction,—
 A flabby-rimmed abyss of imperfection.

Thine eyes are set in bile, thou filthy smoker !
 The very whites of them are yellow ochre :—
 "The windows of the soul" ! !—Another choker.

Thy skull development mine eye displeases ;
 Thou wilt not suffer much from brain diseases ;
 Thy facial angle forty-five degrees is.

The coarseness of thy tresses is distressing,
With grease and raddle firmly coalescing.
I cannot laud thy system of "top-dressing."

Thy dress is somewhat scant for proper feeling;
As is thy flesh, too,—scarce thy bones concealing:
Thy calves unquestionably want re-*veal*ing.

Thy mangy skin is hideous with tattooing,
And legible with hieroglyphic wooing—
Sweet things in art of some fierce lover's doing.

For thou some lover hast, I bet a guinea,—
Some partner in thy fetid ignominy,
The *raison d'être* of this piccaninny.

What must *he* be whose eye thou hast delighted!
His sense of beauty hopelessly benighted!
The canons of his taste how badly sighted!

What must his gauge be, if thy features pleased him?
If lordship of such limbs as thine appeased him,
It was not "*calf-love*" certainly that seized him.

And is he amorously sympathetic?
And doth he kiss thee? . . . Oh my soul prophetic!
The very notion is a strong emetic!

And doth he smooth thine hours with oily talking?
 And take thee conjugally out-a-walking?
 And crown thy transports with a tom-a-hawking.

I guess his love and anger are combined so;
 His passions on thy shoulders are defined so;
 "His passages of love" are *underlined* so.

Tell me thy name. What? . . . Helen? . . . (Oh, Ænone,
 That name bequeathed to one so foul and bony
 Avengeth well thy ruptured matrimony!)

Eve's daughter! with that skull! and that complexion?
 What principle of "Natural Selection"
 Gave thee with Eve the most remote connection?

Sister of L. E. L. . . . of Mrs. Stowe, too!
 Of E. B. Browning! Harriet Martineau, too!
 Do theologians know where fibbers go to?

Of dear George Eliot, whom I worship daily!
 Of Charlotte Brontë! and Joanna Baillie!—
 Methinks that theory is rather "scaly."

Thy primal parents came a period later—
 The handiwork of some vile imitator;
 I fear they had the devil's *imprimatur*.

This in the retrospect.—Now, what's before thee?
The white man's heaven, I fear, would simply bore thee;
Ten minutes of doxology would floor thee.

Thy Paradise should be some land of Goshen,
Where appetite should be thy sole devotion,
And surfeit be the climax of emotion;—

A land of Bunya-bunyas towering splendid,—
Of honey-bags on every tree suspended,—
A Paradise of sleep and riot blended;—

Of tons of 'baccy, and tons more to follow,—
Of wallaby as much as thou couldst swallow,—
Of hollow trees, with 'possums in the hollow;—

There, undismayed by frost, or flood, or thunder,
As joyous as the skies thou roamest under,
There shouldst thou Cooley! . . . Stop! She's off
. . . . No wonder.

MY CHINEE COOK.

THEY who say the bush is dull are not so very far
astray,
For this eucalyptic cloisterdom is anything but gay ;
But its uneventful dulness I contentedly could brook,
If I only could get back my lost, lamented Chinee cook.

We had tried them without number—cooks, to wit—
my wife and I ;
One a week, then three a fortnight, as my wife can
testify ;
But at last we got the right one ; I may say 'twas by a
fluke,
For he dropped in miscellaneous-like, that handy
Chinee cook.

He found the kitchen empty, laid his swag down, and
commenced ;
My wife, surprised, found nothing to say anything
against ;
But she asked him for how much a year the work he
undertook—
“Me workee for me ration,” said that noble Chinee cook.

Then right off from next to nothing such a dinner he
prepared,
That the Governor I'm certain less luxuriously
fared ;
And he waited, too, in spotless white, with such
respectful look,
And bowed his head when grace was said, that pious
Chinee cook.

He did the work of man and maid—made beds and
swept out rooms ;
Nor cooled he in his zeal, as is the manner of new
brooms :
Oh, he shed celestial brightness on the most seques-
tered nook,
For his mop and pail were everywhere—my cleanly
Chinee cook.

We got fat upon his cooking ; we were happy in
those days,
For he tickled up our palates in a thousand pleasant
ways.
Oh his dinners ! Oh his dinners ! they were fit for any
duke !
Oh delectable Mongolian ! Oh celestial Chinee
cook !

There was nothing in creation that he didn't put to
use,

And the less he got to cook with, all the more he could
produce.

All nature was his kitchen range, likewise his cook'ry
book—

Neither Soyer nor Meg Dod could teach that know-
ing Chinee cook.

And day by day upon my wife and me the mystery
grew,

How his virtues were so many and his earnings were
so few ;

And we laid our heads together to find out by hook
or crook,

The secret of the cheapness of that priceless Chinee
cook.

And still the sense of mystery grew on us day by
day,

Till it came to be a trouble, and we wished him well
away ;

But we could not find a fault in one so far above
rebuke—

Ah, we didn't know the value of that valuable
cook.

But one day when I was out he brought my wife a lot
of things,
Turquoise earrings, opal bracelets, ruby brooches,
diamond rings,
And he ran their various prices o'er as glibly as a
book,
And dirt cheap, too, were the jewels of that jewel of a
cook.

I returned, and just in time to stop the purchase of the
lot,
And to ask him where on earth those costly jewels he
had got,
And when I looked him in the face, good gracious
how he shook !
And he says, says he, " Me bought him "—did that
trembling Chinese cook.

And I a justice of the peace ! Oh Fortune ! how un-
kind !
For a certain Sydney robbery came rushing to my
mind.
" You bought them ! Ah, I fear me, John, you paid
them with a hook !
I am bound to apprehend you, oh unhappy Chinese
cook !"

So the mystery was solved at length ; the secret now
we saw ;

John had used us as a refuge from the clutches of the
law ;

And now, alas, too late would I his frailty
overlook !

He is gone, and I am left without my skilful Chinee
cook.

Oh, could I taste again of those delicious luscious
things,

I could pardon him the robbery of other people's
rings ;

I exaggerated principle, my duty I mistook,

When I handed over to the law my peerless Chinee
cook.

What would I give just now for one of his superb
ragouts,

His entremets, his entrées, his incomparable
stews ;

Oh, art and taste and piquancy my happy board for-
sook,

When I came the J.P. over my lamented Chinee
cook.

Take away the hated letters. 'Twas my "justice"
robbed my "peace" ;
Take my name from the commission, and my match-
less cook release.
But I fear my Johnny's dead, for I am haunted by a
spook,
With oblique eyes and a pigtail, like my lost, my
Chinee cook.

MY OTHER CHINEE COOK.

YES, I got another Johnny; but he was to Number
One

As a Satyr to Hyperion, as a rushlight to the sun;
He was lazy, he was cheeky, he was dirty, he was sly,
But he had a single virtue, and its name was rabbit pie.

Now those who say the bush is dull are not so far
astray,

For the neutral tints of station life are anything but
gay;

But, with all its uneventfulness, I solemnly deny
That the bush is unendurable along with rabbit pie.

We had fixed one day to sack him, and agreed to moot
the point
When my lad should bring our usual regale of cindered
joint,
But instead of cindered joint we saw and smelt, my
wife and I,
Such a lovely, such a beautiful, oh! such a rabbit
pie!

There was quite a new expression on his lemon-
coloured face,
And the unexpected odour won him temporary
grace,
For we tacitly postponed the sacking-point till by-and-
bye,
And we tacitly said nothing save the one word "rabbit
pie!"

I had learned that pleasant mystery should simply be
endured,
And forbore to ask of Johnny where the rabbits were
procured;
I had learned from Number One to stand aloof from
how and why,
And I threw myself upon the simple fact of rabbit
pie.

And when the pie was opened, what a picture did we
see!

They lay in beauty side by side, they filled our home
with glee!

How excellent, how succulent, back, neck, and leg,
and thigh!

What a noble gift is manhood! What a trust is rabbit
pie!

For a week the thing continued, rabbit pie from day to
day;

Though where he got the rabbits John would ne'er
vouchsafe to say;

But we never seemed to tire of them, and daily could
descrie

Subtle shades of new delight in each successive rabbit
pie.

Sunday came; by rabbit reckoning, the seventh day of
the week;

We had dined, we sat in silence, both our hearts (?) too
full to speak;

When in walks Cousin George, and, with a sniff, says
he, "Oh my!

What a savoury suggestion! what a smell of rabbit
pie!"

“Oh, why so late, George?” says my wife, “the rabbit pie is gone;

But you *must* have one for tea though. Ring the bell, my dear, for John.”

So I rang the bell for John, to whom my wife did signify,

“Let us have an early tea, John, and another rabbit pie.”

But John seemed taken quite aback, and shook his funny head,

And uttered words I comprehended no more than the dead;

“Go, do as you are bid,” I cried, “we wait for no reply;

Go! let us have tea early, and another rabbit pie!”

Oh, that I had stopped his answer! But it came out with a run:

“Last-a week-a plenty puppy; this-a week-a puppy done!”

Just then my wife, my love, my life, the apple of mine eye,

Was seized with what seemed “mal-de-mer,”—“sick transit” rabbit pie!

And George! By George, he laughed, and then he
howled like any bear!

The while my wife contorted like a mad "convulsion-
naire;"

And I—I rushed on Johnny, and I smote him hip and
thigh,

And I never saw him more, nor tasted more of rabbit
pie.

And the childless mothers met me, as I kicked him
from the door,

With loud maternal wailings and anathemas galore;

I must part with pretty Tiny, I must part with little
Fly,

For I'm sure they know the story of the so-called
"rabbit pie."

A PICCANINNY.

L O by the "humpy" door, a smockless Venus !
Unblushing bronze, she shrinks not, having
seen us,
Though there is nought but short couch-grass between
us.

She hath no polonaise, no Dolly Varden ;
Yet turns she not away, nor asketh pardon ;
Fact is, she doesn't care a copper "farden."

Ah yet, her age her reputation spareth ;
At three years old pert Venus little careth,
She puts her hand upon her hip and stareth ;

All unabashed, unhaberdashed, unheeding,
No Medicean, charmingly receding,
But quite unconscious of improper breeding.

'Tis well ; it smacks of Eden ere came sin in,
Or any rag of consciousness or linen,
Or anything that one could stick a pin in.

Could boundaries be neater ? posture meeter ?
Could bronze antique or terra cotta beat her ?
Saw ever artist any thing completer ?

A shade protuberant, beyond contesting,
Where this day's 'possum is just now digesting,
But otherwise, all over interesting ;

Trim without trimming, furbelow, or bow on ;
Was ever sable skin with such a glow on ?
So darkly soft, so softly sleek, and—so on ?

Did ever fingers scratch a head so woolly ?
Took ever child the outer world so coolly,
Though Fahrenheit's at ninety-seven fully ?

Was ever known so dark, so bright an iris,
Where sleep of light, but never play of fire is—
Where not a soupçon of a wild desire is ?

Oh swarthy statuette ! hast thou no notion
That life is fire and war and wild commotion ?
A burning bush, a chafed and raging ocean ?

Hast thou no questioning of what's before thee ?
Of who shall envy thee, or who adore thee ?
Or whose the jealous weapon that shall score thee ?

Hast thou no faint prevision of disaster—
Of dark abduction from thy lord and master—
Of aliens fleeing, kindred following faster ?

No faint forehearing of the waddies banging,
Of club and heelman together clanging,
War shouts, and universal boomeranging ?

And thou the bone of all the fierce contention—
The direful spring of broken-nosed dissension—
A Helen in the nigger apprehension ?

Nay, my black tulip, I congratulate thee,
Thou canst not guess the troubles that await thee,
Nor carest who shall love or who shall hate thee :

Recking as little of the human passions
As of the very latest Paris fashions,
And soaring not beyond thy daily rations !

Die young, for mercy's sake ! If thou grow older,
Thou shalt grow lean at calf and sharp at shoulder,
And daily greedier and daily bolder ;

A pipe between thy savage grinders thrusting,
For rum and everlasting 'baccy lusting,
And altogether filthy and disgusting.

Just such another as the dam that bore thee—
That haggard Sycorax now bending o'er thee !
Die young, my sable pippin, I implore thee !

Why shouldst thou live to know deterioration ?
To walk, a spectre of emaciation ?
To grow, like that, all over corrugation ?

A trifle miscellaneous like her, too,
An object not "de luxe" and not "de vertu"—
A being odious even to refer to ?

Her childhood, too, like thine, was soft and tender ;
Her womanhood hath nought to recommend her ;
At thirty she is not of any gender.

Oh, dusky fondling, let the warning teach thee !
Through muddiest brain-pulp may the lesson reach thee !
Oh, die of something fatal, I beseech thee !

While yet thou wear'st the crown of morning graces,
While yet the touch of dawn upon thy face is—
Back, little nigger, to the night's embraces !

Hope nought : each year some new defect discloses ;
As sure as o'er thy mouth thy little nose is,
Thy only hope is in metempsychosis.

Who knows but after some few short gradations,
After a brace or so of generations,
We two may have exchanged our hues and stations ?

Methinks I see thee suddenly grow bigger,
White in the face, and stately in the figure,
And I a miserable little nigger !

Should this be thus—oh come not moralising !
Approach not thou my humpy poetising !
Spare thine Iambics and apostrophising !

Let subtle nature, if it suit her, black me,
Let vesture lack me, bigger niggers whack me,
Let hunger rack me, let disaster track me,
And anguish hoist me to her highest acme—

Let me bear all thine incidental curses,
Nor share the smallest of thy scanty mercies,
But put me not—oh, put me not in verses !

She grins. She heedeth not advice or warning,
Alike philosophy and triplets scorning.
Adieu, then. Fare thee well. Ta-ta. Good morning.

“BIG BEN.”

DIED AT YAAMBA CREEK, JULY, 1872.

DE mortuis nil ni-
Si bonum : R.I.P. :—
No more upbraid him :—
Nay, rather plead his cause,
For Ben exactly was
What Nature made him.

Not radically bad,
He naturally had
No leaning sinwards ;
But Nature saw it good
One life-long crave for food
Should rack his inwards.

According to his lights,
And to the appetites
In him implanted,
He did his level best
To feed—and all the rest
He took for granted.

"BIG BEN,"

Ere birth he was *laid* low,
 And yet no man I know
 For high birth matched him :
 Apollo was his sire,
 Who with life-giving fire
 Ab ovo hatched him.

Just over Capricorn
 This same Big Ben was born,
 A feeble lizard ;
 But with the years came strength,
 And twenty feet of length—
 The most part gizzard.

By Fitzroy's rugged crags,
 Its "sawyers" and its snags,
 He roamed piscivorous ;
 Or watching for his prey,
 By Yaamba creek he lay,
 In mood carnivorous.

Unthinking little hogs,
 And careless puppy-dogs
 Fitzroy-ward straying,
 Were grist unto his mill.
 His grinders now are still,
 Himself past *preying*.

Whether in self-defence,
 Or out of hate *prepense*,
 Or just for fun shot,
 Are things beyond my ken—
 I only know Big Ben
 Died of a gunshot.

It was a sorry case;
 For Ben loved all our race,
 Both saint and sinner;
 If he had had his way,
 He would have brought each day
 One home to dinner:—

Loved with that *longing* love,
 Such as is felt above
 The Southern Tropic:—
 Small chance was ever his,
 But his proclivities
 Were philanthropic.

There are who would insist
 He was misogynist,—
 ’Tis slander horrid;
 For every nymph he saw,
 He would have liked her—raw,
 From toe to forehead.

Then let his memory be;
 No misanthrope was he;
 No woman-hater;
 But just what you may call,
 Take him for all in all,
 An *alligator*.

ADELAIDE IRONSIDE.

(AUSTRALIAN PAINTER. BORN AT SYDNEY, NOVEMBER 17,
 1831. DIED AT ROME, APRIL 15, 1867.)

[GUARDIAN ANGEL.]

KNOWEST thou now, Oh Love! Oh pure from
 the death of thy summer of sweetness!

Seest thou now, Oh new-born Delight of the
 Ransomed and Free!

We have gathered the flower for the fruit; we have
 hastened the hour of thy meetness;

For thou wert sealed unto us, and thine Angel hath
 waited for thee.

Not in disdain, Oh Love! Oh Sweet! of desires that
are earthly and mortal,
Not in the scorn of thine Art, whose beginning and
end is Divine,
So soon have we borne thee asleep through the glow
of the uttermost portal,
But in the ruth of high souls that have travailed
with longings like thine.

Nothing is lost, Oh Love! Oh mine! and thy seem-
ingly broken endeavour
Here re-appeareth, transfigured as thou; yet the
Art of thy youth;
And the light of the Spirit of Beauty is on it for ever
and ever;
For Art is the garment of Praise, and the broidered
apparel of Truth.

Seest thou now, Oh Love! how Art, in a way to mor-
tality nameless
Liveth again, soul-informed, love sustained, self com-
pleting, for aye?
How thy heart's purpose was good, and the dream of
thy maidenhood blameless,—
How thy fair dawn is fulfilled in the light of ineffable
day?

Seest thou now, Oh Love! Oh Fair! how the high
spirit-life is Art regnant—

Art become bliss, and harmonious response to the
Infinite Will?

Fused and transfused into Love, with the germs of
eternity pregnant—

Crowned as the law of the beauty of Holiness;
throned, yet Art still?

Not then in vain, Oh Love! thy dawn, nor the dream
of thy holy ambition;

Never a trace of thy finger hath witnessed for Beauty
in vain;

In the bloom of the noon of thine ardour thy soul
became fair for fruition;

We have smitten the green into gold but to spare
thee the harvest of pain.

Nothing that came from thy hand, Oh Love, made
void, cut off, evanescent,—

From the infantile essay that strove with the
weapon of outline alone,

To the Angels thou lovedst to pourtray with luminous
plumes iridescent,

Till thy soul drew so near unto us that we took thee
for one of our own.

Now may'st thou trace, Oh Heart ! Sweet Heart ! from
on high all the way I have led thee,
From the youth of a world in the Seas of the South
to unperishing Rome ;
For the lure of thy following soul was the sheen of my
wings that o'erspread thee,
Flushing with reflex of glory the path of thy pilgrim-
age—home.

By the way of the age of the world I have chosen to
lead thee to glory ;
Of the wine of the might of the world have I given
thee to drink ere thou slept ;
Where the Masters have walked I have laid thee, en-
sphered with the darlings of story ;
I have waked thee a perfected spirit ; matured,
yet thine innocence kept.

There, too, I led thee to feed thee with prescience and
keen intimation
Of the art-adjuvant Grace that hath given thee, a
love-gift, to me ;
By the work of my hands did I wake in thee foretaste
of Transfiguration,—
For thine Angel once wrought upon earth as thou ;
and his work thou did'st see.

Now is thy spirit, Oh Love ; in mine. In thy heart I
behold thou dost know me.

I looked for thy glad recognition ; no converse of
aliens is this ;

Oft when thy longings went upward, thy soul, like a
mirror below me,

Caught my own loveliest visions in shapes of Elysian
bliss.

Name me not now, Oh Love ! Oh mine ! for the name
of my days of way-faring

Still hath the note of a fevered desire, and an echo
of pain.

Come thou, Oh Gift of long hope, to the home of
thine Angel's preparing ;

There I shall show thee the mercy of God, and the
things that remain.

THE DARK COMPANION.

THERE is an orb that mocked the lore of sages
Long time with mystery of strange unrest ;
The steadfast law that rounds the starry ages
Gave doubtful token of supreme behest.

But they who knew the ways of God unchanging,
Concluded some far influence unseen—
Some kindred sphere through viewless ethers ranging,
Whose strong persuasions spanned the void between.

And knowing it alone through perturbation
And vague disquiet of another star,
They named it till the day of revelation,
“ The Dark Companion ”—darkly guessed afar.

But when through new perfection of appliance,
Faith merged at length in undisputed sight,
The mystic mover was revealed to science,
No Dark Companion, but—a speck of light.

No Dark Companion, but a sun of glory ;
No fell disturber, but a bright compeer ;
The shining complement that crowned the story ;
The golden link that made the meaning clear.

Oh, Dark Companion, journeying ever by us,
Oh, grim Perturber of our works and ways,
Oh, potent Dread, unseen, yet ever nigh us,
Disquieting all the tenor of our days—

Oh, Dark Companion, Death, whose wide embraces
O'ertake remotest change of clime and skies—
Oh, Dark Companion, Death, whose grievous traces
Are scattered shreds of riven enterprise—

Thou, too, in this wise, when, our eyes unsealing,
The clearer day shall change our faith to sight,
Shalt show thyself in that supreme revealing
No Dark Companion, but a thing of light.

No ruthless wrecker of harmonious order ;
No alien heart of discord and caprice ;
A beckoning light upon the Blissful Border ;
A kindred element of law and peace.

So, too, our strange unrest in this our dwelling,
The trembling that thou joinest with our mirth,
Are but thy magnet-communings compelling
Our spirits farther from the scope of earth.

So, doubtless, when beneath thy potence swerving,
'Tis that thou leadst us by a path unknown,
Our seeming deviations all subserving
The perfect orbit round the central throne.

* * * * *

The night wind moans. The Austral wilds are round
me.

The loved who live—ah, God! how few they are!
I looked above; and Heaven in mercy found me
This parable of comfort in a star.

THE SOUTHERN CROSS.

(A FRUSTRATION.)

FOUR stars on Night's brow, or Night's bosom,
Whichever the reader prefers ;
Or Night without either may do some,
Each one to his taste or to hers.
Four stars—to continue inditing,
So long as I feel in the vein—
Hullo ! what the deuce is that biting ?
Mosquitos again !

Oh glories not gilded but golden,
Oh daughters of Night unexcelled,
By the sons of the north un beholden,
By our sons (if we have them) beheld ;
Oh jewels the midnight enriching,
Oh four which are double of twain !
Oh mystical—bother the itching !
Mosquitos again !

You alone I can anchor my eye on,
 Of you and you only I'll write :
 And I now look awry on Orion,
 That once was my chiefest delight.
 Ye exalt me high over the petty
 Conditions of pleasure and pain—
 Oh Heaven ! Here are these maladetti
 Mosquitos again !

The poet should ever be placid.
 Oh vex not his soul or his skin !
 Shall I stink them with carbolic acid ?
 It is done and afresh I begin.
 Lucid orbs !—that last sting very sore is ;
 I am fain to leave off, I am fain ;
 It has given me uncommon dolores—
 The Latin for pain.

Not quite what the shape of a cross is—
 A little lop-sided, I own—
 Confound your infernal proboscis,
 Inserted well nigh to the bone !
 Queen-lights of the heights of high heaven,
 Ensconced in the crystal inane—
 Oh me, here are seventy times seven
 Mosquitos again !

Oh horns of a mighty trapezium !
 Quadrilateral area, hail !
 Oh bright is the light of magnesium !
 Oh hang them all, female and male !
 At the end of an hour of their stinging,
 What shall rest of me then, what remain ?
 I shall die as the swan dieth, singing,
 Mosquitos again !

Shock keen as the stroke of the leven !
 They sting, and I change in a flash
 From the peace and the poppies of heaven
 To the flame and the firewood of—dash !
 Oh Cross of the South, I forgot you !
 These demons have addled my brain.
 Once more I look upward. . . Od rot you !
 You're at it again !

There ! stick in your pitiless brad-awl,
 And do your malevolent worst !
 Dine on me and when you have had all,
 Let others go in for a burst !
 Oh silent and pure constellation,
 Can you pardon my fretful refrain ?
 Forgive, oh forgive my vexation—
 They're at it again !

Oh imps that provoke to mad laughter,
Winged fiends that are fed from my brow,
Bite hard ! let your neighbours come after,
And sting where ye stung me just now !
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
Round blotches I rub at in vain !
Oh Crux ! whatsoever I've written,
I've written in pain.

Ye chrysolite crystalline creatures,
Wan watchers the fairest afield,
Stars—and garters, are these my own features
In the merciless mirror revealed !
They are mine, even mine, and none other,
And my hands how they slacken and strain !
Oh my sister, my spouse, and my mother !
I'm going insane !

A BRISBANE REVERIE.

MARCH, 1873.

AS I sit beside my little study window, looking
down

From the heights of contemplation (attic front) upon
the town—

(Attic front, per week—with board, of course—a sov'-
reign and a crown) ;—

As I sit—(these sad digressions, though, are much to
be deplored)—

In my lonely little attic—(it is all I can afford ;
And I should have mentioned, washing *not* included
in the board) ;—

As I sit—(these wild parentheses my very soul ab-
hors)—

High above the ills of life, its petty rumours, paltry
wars—

(The attic back is cheaper, but it wants a chest of
drawers) ;—

In the purpling light of half-past six before the stars
are met,
While the stricken sun clings fondly to his royal
mantle yet,
Dying glorious on the hill-tops in reluctant
violet,—

Just the time that favours vision, blissful moments
that unbar
The inner sight (assisted by a very mild cigar),
To behold the things that are not, side by side with
those that are,—

Just the very light and very time that suit the bard's
complaint,
When through present, past, and future, roams his soul
without restraint—
When no clearer are the things that are than are the
things that ain't ;—

With a dual apperception, metaphysical, profound,
Past and present running parallel, I scan the scene
around—
(Were there two of us the attic front would only be a
pound).—

Beneath mine eyes the buried past arises from the
tomb,
Not cadaverous or ghostly, but in all its living
bloom—
(I would rather pay the odds than have a partner in
my room).

How the complex *now* contrasteth with the elemental
then!

Tide of change outflowing flow of ink, outstripping
stride of pen!
(Unless it were, but no they only take in
single men).

Where trackless wilderness lay wide, a hundred ages
through—
I can see a man with papers, from my attic point of
view,
Who for gath'ring house-assessments gets a very de-
cent screw.

Where forest-contiguity assuaged the summer heats,
It is now an argued question, when the City Council
meets,
If we mightn't buy a tree or two to shade the glaring
streets.

Where no sound announced the flight of time, not
even crow of cock,
I can see the gun that stuns the town with monitory
shock,
And a son of that same weapon hired to shoot at
1 o'clock.

Where the kangaroo gave hops, the "old man" fleetest
of the fleet,
Mrs. Pursy gives a "hop" to-night to all the town's
élite,
But her "old man" cannot hop because of bunions on
his feet.

Where the emu, "at its own sweet will," went wander-
ing all the day,
And left its bill-prints on whate'er came handy in its
way,
There are printed bills that advertise "The Emu for
the Bay."

Where of old with awful mysteries and diabolic
din,
They "kippered" adolescents in the presence of their
kin,
There's a grocer selling *herrings* kippered, half-a-crown
per tin.

Where the savage only used his club to supplement
his fist,
The white man uses his for friendly intercourse and
whist,
Not to mention sherry, port, bordeaux, et cetera—see
list.

Where dress was at a discount, or at most a modest
“fall,”
Rise “Criterion,” “Cosmopolitan,” and “City Cloth-
ing Hall,”
And neither men nor women count for much—the
dress is all.

Where a bride's trousseau consisted of an extra coat of
grease,
And Nature gave the pair a suit of glossy black
apiece,
Now the matrimonial outfit is a perfect golden
fleece.

Where lorn widows wore the knee-joints of the late
lamented dead,
We have dashing wives who wear their living husbands'
joints instead—
Yea, their vitals, for embellishment of bosom, neck,
and head.

Where the blacks, ignoring livers, lived according to
their wills,
Nor knew that flesh is heir to quite a lexicon of
ills,
Five white chemists in one street grow rich through
antibilious pills.

Where the only bell was the bell-bird's note, now many
mingling bells
"Make Catholic the trembling air," as famed George
Eliot tells
Of another town somewhere between more northern
parallels.

(But in case the name of Catholic offend protesting
ear,
Let Wesleyan or Baptist be interpolated here,
Or that bells make Presbyterian the trembling atmo-
sphere).

Where the savage learned no love from earth, nor
from the "shining frame,"
And merely feared the devil under some outlandish
name,
There are heaps of Britishers whose creed is—very
much the same!

Where the gin was black—(methinks 'tis time the bard
 were shutting up :
 The bell is ringing for the non-inebriating cup,
 And even attic bards must have their little “bite and
 sup”).

A LOST CHANCE.

[It is stated that a shepherd, who had for many years grazed his
 flocks in the district in which a rich tin-mining town in
 Queensland now stands, went mad on learning of the great
 discoveries made there.]

JUST to miss it by a hair's breadth! Nay, not miss
 it! To have held it
 In my hand, and oftimes through my fingers run
 the swarthy ore!
 Minus only the poor trick of Art or Science that com-
 pelled it
 To unveil for others' good the hidden value, and to
 pour
 On to a thousand hearts the light of Hope, that
 shines for *me* no more!

To have held it in my hand in vacant listlessness of
wonder,

Taken with its dusky lustre, all incurious of its
worth—

To have trod for years upon it, I above, and Fortune
under—

To have scattered it a thousand times like seed upon
the earth!

Who shall say I am not justified who curse my day
of birth?

To have built my hovel o'er it—to have dreamed above
it nightly—

Pillowed on the weal of thousand lives, and dead
unto my own!

Planning paltry profits wrung from year-long toil, and
holding lightly

What lay acres-wide around me, naked-bright, or
grass-o'ergrown—

Holding lightly—and for that I curse—no, not my-
self alone!

For a youth made vain with riot, for the golden graces
squandered,

Home forsaken, dear ones alienated, Love itself
aggrieved,

I had sworn a full atonement, to the ends of earth
 had wandered,
Drunk the dregs of expiation, unbelauded, unper-
 ceived—
Heav'n alone beheld, and—mocks me with what
 “might have been” achieved!

All the cold suspicion of the world I took for my
 demerit,
Its deceit my retribution, its malignity my meed :
When Misfortune smote, un murmuring I bowed my
 head to bear it,
Driven to minister to brutes in my extremity of
 need—
Who shall say *now* it delights not Heaven to break
 the bruised reed?

In the round of conscious being, from the rising to the
 setting
Of Thine imaged self, Thy merciless, unsympathising
 Sun,
Was there one from hard Disaster's hand so piteously
 shrinking
Whom this boon had more advantaged? God, I ask
 Thee, was there one?
In Thy passionless immunity, Thou knowest there
 was none!

To the wrongs the world hath wrought me, to its
coldness and disfavour,

To the wreck of every venture, to enduring un-
success,

To the sweat of cheerless toil, the bread made bitter
with the savour

Of the leaven of regret, and tears of unforgetfulness,
Hadst thou need to add Thy mockery, to perfect my
distress?

For I hold it cruel mockery in man, or God, or
devil,

To assign the poor his blindfold lot from weary day
to day,

In the very lap of Affluence, on Fortune's highest
level,

Then upon the brink of revelation, trick his steps
away,

And flash the truth upon him when the chance is
gone for aye!

I had soothed repulse with hope, matched disappoint-
ment with defiance,

Or opposed a pliant meekness to the driving storms
of Fate :

But—the merely “coming short!” Oh, what reme-
dial appliance,

What demeanour of resistance shall have virtue to
abate
The nameless woe that trembles in the echo of Too
Late !

Oh, the might have been ! the might have been ! the
sting of it ! the madness !

What a wave of the Inexorable chokes my fitful
breath !

What a rush of olden echoes voiced with many-sound-
ing sadness !

What a throng of new despairs that drive me down
the path of death !

Who is there in heaven who careth ? Who on earth
who comforteth ?

They on earth but seek their own. In eager crowds
they hasten thither

Where I trod so late unconscious on futurities un-
told.

And I ! I, whose all is gone ! The curse of desolation
wither—

Whom ?—Myself, who, year-worn, turned again unto
the sin of old ?

Or the fiends who sold me poison for my little all of
gold ?

Both! All men! Yea, Heaven! But chiefly those who
prosper where I languished!

Those who reap the ripe occasion, where in many a
wandering line,

The old traces of my footsteps, worn in fevered moods
and anguished,

Now are paths of rich expectancy for other feet
than mine!

Can I breathe without upbraiding? Shall I die
without a sign?

It was mine! *Is* mine, by Heaven! Consecrated to
me only,

By the sacred right of service, by the pledge of
weary years!

By the bond of silent witness, by communion dumb
and lonely,

By the seal of many sorrows, by the sacrament of
tears!

Mine!—The echoes laugh, and the fiends of hell
are answering with jeers.

* * * * *

Where am I? and who are these?—Nay, nay! Un-
hand me! Let me go, sirs!

I am very very rich ! I've miles on miles of priceless ore !

I will make your fortunes—all of you !—and I would have you know, sirs—

There is not a single sheep amissing—Loose me, I implore !

It is only sleep that ails me—let me sleep—for evermore !

THE SQUATTER'S BACCY FAMINE.

IN blackest gloom he cursed his lot;
His breath was one long weary sigh;
His brows were gathered in a knot
That only baccy could untie.
His oldest pipe was scraped out clean;
The deuce a puff was left him there;
A hollow sucking sound of air
Was all he got his lips between.
He only said "My life is dreary,
The Baccy 's done," he said.
He said "I am aweary, aweary;
By Jove, I'm nearly dead."

The chimney-piece he searched in vain,
 Into each pocket plunged his fist;
His cheek was blanched with weary pain,
 His mouth awry for want of twist.
He idled with his baccy-knife;
 He had no care for daily bread:—
 A single stick of Negro-head
Would be to him the staff of life.

 He only said "My life is dreary.
 The Baccy 's done," he said.
 He said "I am aweary, aweary;
 I'd *most as soon* be dead."

Books had no power to mend his grief;
 The magazines could tempt no more;
"Cut Gold-Leaf" was the only leaf
 That he had cared to ponder o'er.
From chair to sofa sad he swings,
 And then from sofa back to chair;
 But in the depth of his despair
Can catch no "bird's-eye" view of things.
 And still he said "My life is dreary.
 No Baccy, boys," he said.
 He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
 I'd *just as soon* be dead."

His meals go by he knows not how ;
 No taste in flesh, or fowl, or fish ;
 There's not a dish could tempt him now,
 Except a cake of Caven-dish.
 His life is but a weary drag ;
 He cannot choose but curse and swear,
 And thrust his fingers through his hair,
 All shaggy in the want of shag.
 And still he said, "My life is dreary.
 No Baccy, boys," he said.
 He said, "I am aweary, aweary ;
 I'd *rather far* be dead.

To him one end of old cheroot
 Were sweetest root that ever grew.
 No honey were due substitute
 For "Our Superior Honey-Dew."
 One little fig of Latakia
 Would buy all fruits of Paradise ;
 "Prince Alfred's Mixture" fetch a price
 Above both Prince and Galatea.
 Sudden he said, "No more be dreary !
 The dray has come !" he said.
 He said, "I'll smoke till I am weary,—
 And then, I'll go to bed."

“MY WORD !—NO FEAR.”

IT is the Bushman come to town ;—
“Moy word !—No fear !”

Come to spend his cheque in town,
Come to do his “lambing down” :—
Mark his hat with lofty crown,
Cheeks done tropically brown,
Tread of horse, and stare of clown,
And his “Moy word !—No fear !”

Top to toe all spick and span ;—
“Moy word !—No fear !”

Top to toe all spick and span ;
All that wool and leather can
Do to make a man a man ;
Hear him foremost in the van
Of pleasures metropolitan,
With his “Moy word !—No fear !”

Brisbane is a jolly place—
“Moy word !—No fear !”

Brisbane is a jolly place ;
Pleasure lights the Bushman’s face ;

“MY WORD!—NO FEAR.”

Health and “spirits” run a race ;
 Beauty (?) lends her soft embrace ;
 Lots of fun and no disgrace ;—
 This is how he goes the pace,
 With his “Moy word !—No fear !”

Comes the bottom of the purse—
 Oh dear ! Oh dear !
 Comes the bottom of the purse—
 Not a penny to disburse ;
 Body sick, and spirit worse ;
 Bushman now not worth a curse ;
 Send a doctor or a nurse,
 Or undertaker with a hearse—
 Oh dear ! Oh dear !

THE ANTIPODES.

A TOWN, a river, hills and trees,
Blue-bounded by the boundless sky—
Is this the strange antipodes
That baffled young credulity?

Once on a time, of childhood's dreams
This was the very cap and crown;
But now how natural it seems
That down is up, and up is down!

Things on the whole don't look askew:
It's "all serene," somehow or other;
And yet 'tis veritably true
That I am treading on my mother!

Oh, mother dear, forgive the act,
Great Nature's laws my steps control:—
Love leaps o'er all; we are, in fact,
Now more than ever sole to sole!

SPIRIT AND STAR.

THROUGH the bleak cold voids, through the
wilds of space,
Trackless and starless, forgotten of grace,—
Through the dusk that is neither day nor night,
Through the grey that is neither dark nor light—
Through thin chill ethers where dieth speech,
Where the pulse of the music of heaven cannot reach,
Unwarmed by the breath of living thing,
And for ever unswept of angel's wing—
Through the cold, through the void, through the wilds.
of space,
With never a home or a resting-place,
How far must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Once on a time unto me was given
The fairest star in the starry heaven—
A little star, to tend and to guide,
To nourish and cherish and love as a bride.
Far from all great bright orbs, alone,
Even to few of the angels known,
It moved ; but a sweet pale light on its face
From the sapphire foot of the throne of grace,
That was better than glory and more than might,
Made it a wonder of quiet delight.
Still must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

On the starry brow was the peace of the blest,
And bounteous peace on the starry breast ;
All beautiful things were blossoming there,
Sighing their loves to the delicate air :
No creature of God such fragrance breathed,
White-rose-girdled and white-rose-wreathed :
And its motion was music, an undertone,
With a strange sad sweetness all its own,
Dearer to me than the louder hymn
Of the God-enraptured seraphim.—
How far must I wander? Ah Heaven, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

In a round of joy, remote and alone,
Yet ever in sight of the great white throne,
Together we moved, for a love divine
Had blent the life of the star with mine :—
And had all the angels of all the spheres
Forecast my fate and foretold my tears,
The weary wand'ring, the gruesome gloom,
And bruited them forth through the Trump of
Doom—

Hiding a smile in my soul, I had moved
Only the nearer to what I loved.
Yet I must wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Ah woe the delusive demon-light
That beckoned me, beckoned me, day and night!—
The untwining of heartstrings, the backward glance,
The truce with faith, and the severance!
Ah woe the unfolding of wayward wings
That bore me away from all joyous things,
To realms of space whence the pale sweet gleam
Looked dim as a dimly-remembered dream—
To farther realms where the faint light spent
Vanished at length from my firmament;
And I seek it in vain—Ah God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

On sleepless wing I have followed it
Through the star-sown fields of the Infinite ;
And where foot of angel hath never trod
I have threaded the golden mazes of God ;
I have pierced where the fire-fount of being runs,
I have dashed myself madly on burning suns,
Then downward have swept with shuddering breath
Through the place of the shadows and shapes of
death,

Till sick with sorrow and spent with pain
I float and faint in the dim inane !
Must I yet wander? Ah God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star !

Oh could I find in uttermost space,
A place for hope, and for prayer a place,
Mine were no suit for a glittering prize
In the chosen seats of the upper skies—
No grand ministration, no thronèd height
In the midmost intense of unspeakable light.
What sun-god sphere with all-dazzling beam
Could be unto me as that sweet, sad gleam?
Let me roam through the ages all alone,
If He give me not back my own, my own !
How far must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star !

In the whispers that tremble from sphere to sphere,
 Which the ear of a spirit alone can hear,
 I have heard it breathed that there cometh a day
 When tears from all eyes shall be wiped away,
 When faintness of heart and drooping of wings
 Shall be told as a tale of olden things,
 When toil and trouble and all distress
 Shall be lost in the round of Blessedness.
 In that day when dividing of loves shall cease,
 And all things draw near to the centre of peace,
 In the fulness of time, in the ages afar,
 God, oh God, shall I find my star ?

NEW CHUM AND OLD MONARCH.

“Story ! God bless you ! I have none to tell, sir.”

—CANNING.

“CHIEFTAIN, enter my verandah;
 Sit not in the blinding glare;
 Thou shalt have a refuge, and a
 Remnant of my household fare.

“Ill becomes thy princely haunches
Such a seat upon the ground:
Doubtless, on a throne of branches
Thou hast sat, banana-crowned.

“By the brazen tablet gleaming
On the darkness of thy breast,
Which, unto all outward seeming,
Serves for trousers, coat, and vest;—

“By the words thereon engraven,
Of thy royal rank the gage,
Hail! true King, in all things save in
Unessential acreage.

“Such divinity doth hedge thee,
I had guessed thy rank with ease;—
Such divinity—(but edge thee
Somewhat more to leeward, please.)

“Though thy lineage I know not,
Thou art to the manner born;
Every inch a king, although not
King of one square barleycorn.

“Enter, sire; no longer linger;
Cease thy signals grandly dumb;
Point not thus with royal finger
To thy hungry vacuum.

“Though thy pangs are multifarious,
Soon they all shall pass away:
Come, my begging Belisarius—
Belisorius, I should say.

“Fear not; I am the intruder;
I, and white men such as I:
Simpler though thou art, and ruder,
Thou art heir of earth and sky.

“Thine the mountain, thine the river,
Thine the endless miles of scrub:
Shall I grudge thee, then—oh never!—
Useless ends of refuse grub?

“Lay aside thy spears—(I doubt them);
Lay aside thy tomahawk;
I prefer thee, sire, without them,
By a somewhat longish chalk.

“Lay aside thy nullah-nullahs ;
Is there war betwixt us two ?
Soon the pipe of peace shall lull us—
Pipe a-piece, *bien entendu*.

“Seat thee in this canvas chair here ;
Heed not thou the slumbering hound ;
Fear not ; all is on the square here,
Though thou strangely lookest round.

“Or if thou, my chair deriding,
Follow thine ancestral bent,
To the naked floor subsiding
Down the groove of precedent,—

“If the boards have more temptation,
Wherefore should I say thee No,
Seeing caudal induration
Must have set in long ago ?

“Take thou now this refuse mince-meat ;
Pick this bone, my regal guest :
Shall a fallen-warrior prince meet
Other welcome than the best ?

“Treated like a very rebel,
Chased from town at set of sun,
Wert thou ev’n the debbil-debbil,
Thou shouldst eat—when I am done.”

On the bare floor sat the sable
Chieftain of a fallen race,
Two black knees his only table,
“Wai-a-roo ” his simple grace.

Stood I by and ruminated
On the chief’s Decline and Fall,
While his highness masticated
What I gave him, bone and all.

“Chief,” said I, when all had vanished,
“Fain am I thou shouldst relate
Why thou roam’st discrowned and banished
From thy scrub-palatinate.”

Stared the chief, and wildly muttered,
As if words refused to come ;
“Want him rum,” at length he uttered ;
“Black f’lo plenty like him rum !”

“Nay! ’Twill make thee mad—demoniac!
Set thee all a-fire within!
Law forbids thee rum and cognac,
Though in mercy, spares thy gin.

“Come; thy tale, if thou hast any.”—
Forth the chieftain stretched his hand,
Stood erect, and shouted “Penny!”
In a voice of stern command.

“Out upon thee! savage squalid!
Mine ideal thus to crush,
With thy beggary gross and solid,
All for money and for lush!

“Out upon thee! prince degenerate!
Get thee to thy native scrub!
Die a dog’s death!—or at any rate,
Trouble me no more for grub!

“At him, Ginger! Up and at him!
Go it, lad! On, Ginger, on!
King, indeed! the beggar! . . . Drat him!
One more ’fond illusion gone.”

OFF THE TRACK.

O H where the deuce is the track, the track?
Round an' round, an' forrard, an' back!
"Keep the sun on yer right," they said—
But, hang it, he's gone an' got over my head!

"Make for a belt of apple trees;"—
Jist so. But where's yer belt, if ye please?
By gum, it's hot! This child'll melt,
An' there ain't no apples, nor ain't no belt.

"Keep clear o' the timber-getters' tracks,"—
But wich is wich, I'd beg to ax?
They forks and jines, the devil knows how—
I wish I'd a sight o' either now!

"Leave the track," sez they, "when you sees
Some yards to the right two big grass trees."
Two! It's dozens on dozens I pass—
Most on 'em big, an' all on 'em grass.

Oh where the deuce is the track, the track?
 I'm fairly taken aback, aback.
 "Keep tow'rd the river. You can't go wrong."
 Whew? Can't I, though! That was rayther strong.

"Follow the lay o' the land," sez they;
 But, Lord, this flat ain't got no lay!
 Whew! Ain't it hot on the pint o' the nose!
 An' the more I mops the hotter I grows.

"An' when you comes to the foot o' the range"—
 WHEN! That's the pint. But ain't it strange,
 That the further I goes, to left or right,
 The more there ain't no range in sight.

Gum trees, gum trees, slim an' high,
 Timber green an' timber dry,
 Blackened stumps an' fallen logs—
 Lively work as on we jogs!

Oh the devil an' all take the flat, the flat!
 I'm one myself for the matter o' that.
 I'm mazed, an' so is the brute I rides,
 An' the sun's getting over the left besides.

Dash it, I'll follow my nose, my nose !
 Step out, straight forrard, here goes, here goes !
 Let the sun be left, or the sun be right,
 Summat or other must come in sight.

* * * * *

Well, well ! If this ain't too bad by half !
 Lor', how the beggars 'll laugh an' chaff !
 Back to my startin' point? Yes ; tis so.
 I put up them slip-rails six hours ago.

THE HEADLESS TROOPER.

“ **N**O ; not another step, for all
 The troopers out of hell !
 I'll camp beside this swamp to-night,
 Despite the yarns you tell.
 I'm dead beat ; that's a solid fact ;
 The other thing's a sell.”

And Ike gave in ; good easy Ike ;
 Though now and then he stole
A glance across that dismal swamp,
 Lugubriously droll ;
'Twas plain that Headless Trooper lay
 Heavily on his soul.

And, ere he slept, again he told
 That tale of bloody men ;
And how the Headless Trooper still
 Rode nightly in the fen ;
And then he slept, but in his sleep
 He told it all again.

I cannot rest beside a man
 Who mutters in his sleep ;
It makes the chilly goose-flesh rise,
 The epidermis creep—
('Tis no objection in a wife—
 You get her secrets—cheap).

I put a hundred yards between
 The muttering Ike and me :
I lay and thought of things that were,
 And things that yet might be :
I could not sleep ; I know not why ;
 My hair rose eerily.

I rose and sat me on a log,
And tried to keep me cool ;
I thought of " Hume on Miracles,"
And called myself a fool ;
But still the proverb racked my soul,
" Exceptions prove the rule."

The moon was full ; the stars were out ;
I tried to fix my eye
Where Night laid shining love-gifts
On the bosom of the sky ;—
But well I knew that all the while
The Thing was standing by.

How tall this pine tree on my left !
How graceful in its height !
Its topmost branches seem to touch
The very brow of Night ;—
But all the while I knew the Thing
Was panting at my right.

The 'possum leaves his hollow tree ;
The bandicoot is glad ;
It is the human heart alone
The still night maketh sad ;—
And all the while the Headless Thing
Was wheezing there like mad.

How ghostly is the mist that crawls
 Along the swampy ground !
The Headless Thing here cleared its throat
 With most unearthly sound !
And then I heard a gurgling voice,
 But dared not glance around.

“They shot me ; Was it not enough !
 Look, darn you ! Here’s the hole !
Was this not passage amply wide
 For any human soul ?
But, no ! the blasted convict gang
 Must likewise take my poll !”

I turned ; looked up ; and at the sight
 My heart within me sunk :
’Twas new to me to find myself
 In such a mortal funk ;—
But newer still to fraternise
 With a bifurcated trunk !

Above the neck no trooper was ;
 But formless void alone ;
There physiognomy was *nil*,
 Phrenology unknown ;
Where head had been there but remained
 The frustum of a cone !

Nay ; I retract the "formless void ;"
The case was otherwise ;
For on the clotted marge there spun
A living globe of flies !
When one is dealing with the truth
One can't be too precise.

The loathsome whirling substitute
Buzzed in the vacant space,
And a thousand thousand little heads
Of one head took the place :—
And oh, the fly expression
Of that rotatory face !

The breast was bare ; the shirt thrown back
Exposed the wound to view :
The bullet in its course of death
Had cleared an avenue :—
Oh Gemini ! I saw the Twins
Distinctly shining through !
And those same Twins are shining still
To prove my story true.

In breeches, boots, and spurs arrayed
The nether Trooper stood ;
The soundless phantom of a horse
Grazed in his neighbourhood,—
At all events went through the form
Of hoisting in his food.

“What wouldst thou, Headless Trooper,
On the night’s Plutonian shore?”

I took it from Poe’s Raven
I had read not long before ;
And I more than half expected
He would answer “Nevermore !”

But the Trooper only answered
By a perfect storm of sighs,
Which through his crater issuing,
Played Hades with the flies,—
As I have seen Vesuvius
Blow ashes to the skies !

“Oh wherefore, Headless Trooper,
With the living intermix ?
Since thou art dead, and hast no head,
Why kick against the pricks ?
Why dost thou not, as others do,
Get clear across the Styx ?”

The Trooper cleared his cone of flies,
And through his crater said,
“’Tis true I have no business here ;
’Tis true that I am dead ;
And yet I cannot cross the Styx—
They’ve fixed a fare ‘*per head* !’

“ Fain would I cross as others do—
Fain would I pay my shot !
They only mock me when I ask
For leave to go to Pot !
How *can* I pay so much ‘*per head*’
When I no head have got ?

“ Yet what could I, thus headless, do
In that last Land of Nod ?
It is not that the thing is dear,
So much as that it’s odd ;—
They only charge an obolus,
A sort of Tommy Dodd.

“ I’ve tried the ferryman with gold—
With every coin that goes ;
He merely cries, ‘ Oh, go *a-head* !’
And, laughing, off he rows.
He can’t twit me, at all events,
With paying through the nose !

“ A drachma once I offered him,
Six times the fare in Greek ;
He merely cursed my ‘ impudence,’
And pushed off in a pique :—
I didn’t think a faceless man
Could be accused of cheek.

“ From day to day, from night to night,
My prayer the wretch denies ;
Yet even in this headless breast
Some grateful thoughts arise—
For though he’s blasted all my hopes,
He cannot blast my eyes.

“ I know not where the convict crew
My missing head consigned,
But I am doomed to walk the earth
Till that same head I find.
Oh, could I come across it
I would know it though I’m blind,—
The bump of amativeness sticks
So strongly out behind !

“ The mouth extends from ear to ear ;
The hair is fiery red ;
Perchance it might attract thine eye
Who art not blind or dead ;
I pray thee help me to obtain
My disembodied head !”

“ Oh Headless Trooper, fain would I
With thee the search begin,
But ere the day I must away,
And trudge through thick and thin ;
For I am bound to Stanthorpe town,
And time with me is tin.

“ But ere upon my pilgrimage
 With dawn’s first streak I go,
 I fain would do what in me lies
 To mitigate thy woe.
 If I can serve thee anywise,
 I pray thee let me know.”

The Trooper thought a little space,
 His body forward bowed,
 With plenteous sighs dispersed the flies,
 And once more spoke aloud :—
 “ ’Tis long since I have tried the weed ;
 I’d like to blow a cloud.”

“ How canst thou, headless man, who hast
 No lips wherewith to puff ?”
 Here deprecatingly he waved
 His hand, and said “ Enough.
 Myself will guarantee the how,
 If thou supply the stuff.”

I took a meerschaum from my pouch,
 A meerschaum clean and new,
 As white as is undoctored milk,
 As pure as morning dew :—
 I pray you mark that it was white,
 ’Twill prove my story true.

I passed it to him, filled and lit.
Still wondering in my mind.

“Thanks, generous colonial,
Thou art very, very kind.
Now pick a thickish waddy up,
And plug my wound behind.”

I picked a thickish waddy up,
And did as I was bid ;
And right into the bullet-hole
The amber mouth he slid ;
And then !—You never saw the like !
At least *I* never did.

Like a forge bellows went his chest,
And upward from his cone
There shot a vaporous spire, like that
From Cotopaxi blown.
The flies unglobed themselves, and fled
With angry monotone.

So fierce the blast, the pipe was void
Ere one might reckon ten ;
And then with gesture wild he signed
To fill the bowl again ;
The which I did, till he had smoked
Enough for fifty men.

Hour after hour he drew and blew,
Till twist began to fail,
Till all the sky grew dim with smoke,
And all the stars grew pale ;
Till even the seasoned stomach turned
Of him who tells the tale.

The smoke mixed darkly with the mists
On the adjacent bogs,
And roused the hoarse remonstrant wail
Of semi-stifled frogs ;
The 'possums all within a mile
Went home as sick as dogs.

But suddenly the phantom steed
Neighed with sepulchral sound,
And where both man and horse had been
Nor man nor horse was found !
I stood alone ; the meerschaum lay
Before me on the ground.

The meerschaum lay upon the ground—
This much I may avouch ;
I took it, and with trembling hand
Replaced it in my pouch ;
And overcome with nausea
I sought my grassy couch.

The sun was up when I awoke,
And in his gladsome beams
I mocked the things of yesternight,
And laughed away my dreams :
Disciples of the School of Doubt
Are always in extremes.

But when I roused me from my couch
To take my morning smoke,
Like lightning flash the verity
Upon my laughter broke ;—
The scarcity of 'baccy proved
The thing beyond a joke.

And when my pouch I opened next—
(Now check the wanton jeer)—
My pipe, my new, fresh meerschaum pipe—
('Tis true as I am here)—
My pipe was "*coloured !*" as if I
Had smoked it for a year !

My pipe was coloured !—no, not brown,
But black—as black as jet.
You don't believe it?—Man alive,
The pipe is coloured yet !
Look here—why here's the best of proofs—
The pipe, videlicet.

KING BILLY'S SKULL.

THE scene is the Southern Hemisphere ;
The time—oh, any time of the year
Will do as well as another ; say June,
Put it down likewise as the full of the Moon,
And midnight to boot, when churchyards, they say,
Yawn in a most unmannerly way ;
And restless ghosts in winding-sheets
Go forth and jabber about the streets,
And rehearse old crimes that were better hid
In the darkness beneath the coffin-lid.
Observe, that I merely say, *on dit* ;
But though it never happened to me
To encounter, either in-doors or out,
A posthumous gentleman walking about,
In regulation sepulchral guise,
Or in shirt, crimean or otherwise,
Or in hat and boots and usual wear,
Or, save for a cloud, unbecomingly bare,
Or in gaseous form, with the stars shining through him,
Beckoning me to interview him—
On mission of solemnest import bound,
Or merely a constitutional round,

Beginning at twelve as books declare,
And ending at first sniff of morning air ;—
Though all such things, you will understand,
Have reached me only at second-hand,
Or third, or fourth, as the case may be,
Yet there really did occur to me
Something which I perforce must call
Ultra-super-natural ;—
In fact trans-ultra-super-preter—
Natural suits both truth and metre.

There is an Island, I won't say where,
For some yet live who mightn't care
To have the address too widely known ;
Suffice it to say : South Temperate Zone.
In that same Isle thus precisely set down,
There's a certain township, and also a town—
(For, to ears colonial, I need not state
That the two do not always homologate).—
And in that same town there's a certain street ;
And in that same street the *locale* to complete,
There's a certain Surgery, trim and neat,
Kept by—— well, perhaps it were rash
To call him other than Doctor Dash.

At midnight, then, in the month of June
(And don't forget the full of the moon),

I sat in that Surgery, writhing with pain,
Having waited fully two hours in vain
For Doctor Dash, who, I understood,
Was engaged in the questionable good
Of adding one to the sum of woe
That includes all creatures here below,—
Especially those whose particular dolour,
As mine was then, is a rotten molar!

Have you noted that midnight's final stroke
Has a way of solemnising folk?
Though, goodness knows, in my special case
With a cheek that was quite a three-quarter face,
There needed no solemnising power,
No eerie vibration of midnight hour,
Chilling through heart, and thrilling through limb,
To put me *en rapport* with all things grim,
With all things dreary and dismal and dim,
The whole Night side of Nature (see Crow—not Jim).

Hardly was tolled the day's decease
From the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece,
When a running fire of perplexing knocks
Seemed to proceed from a rosewood box,
That stood on a table whereon were laid
The horrible tools of the surgical trade.
Somewhat slowly the notes began

With minims, and then into crotchets ran,—
From crotchets to quavers, then faster they grew,
Gallopings, gallopings, thirty-two
Beats to the semibreve—doubling once more
To a semibreve split into sixty-four,
Till failing to follow so rapid a rate,
I gave in at a hundred and twenty-eight.

I was scared, I confess, but the wish to know
Was stronger than terror of ghostly foe;
And stealthily, stealthily nearing the knocks,
I pressed my ear on the rosewood box,
And fancied I could discern beneath
The peculiar rattle of chattering teeth;
Which, as need hardly be said or penned,
Set each particular hair on end,
Froze all my young blood in a moment of time,
And curdled my bile, and my chyle, and my chyme!

But though terror undoubtedly gained the day,
Yet curiosity too had its way,
And the first had no sooner sung out *Avaunt!*
When the second cried *Stay!* what the deuce do you want?

Often as I have told the tale,
This particular part is so "like a whale,"
That I always feel an apology due
For insisting upon it as perfectly true.

This is what followed,—a grinding noise,
 A friction of bones that grew to a voice ;
 And I heard these words (on my honour, I did),
 “Hi ! . . . Cooley ! . . . You fella . . . Open 'im lid!”

Trembling all over from foot to head,
 “How shall I open it, Spirit?” I said :—
 “Lies there, oh lies there no key about ?
 For how can I open the coffer without ?”

A kind of an audible ossified grin,
 A gnashing of laughter, came from within,
 And little by little I understood,
 “You fella new chum You no good ;
 White fella crawler you no go,
 Key in 'im lock my word 'tis so.”

It was so indeed. I opened, and lo !
 An afrit ? A goblin ? A bottle-imp ? No ;
 Simply a Human Skull, enshrined
 In rosewood, padded and velvet-lined,—
 A low type of skull, as one could see
 From the brutish depression where forehead should be ;
 Yet surely precious in some degree
 To judge from the case, not to mention the key
 And the lock by a well-known patentee.

All was still for three minutes at least ;
 Knocks and voices alike had ceased ;

There lay the skull as silent and dumb
As Lot's wife's salted cranium.
Had it been all a gross mistake
In the frenzy begotten of molar-ache?
Was the whole affair but a fancy-freak,
Forged in the heat of a throbbing cheek?
Was it all—but rather than wait the event,
I determined to make the experiment.
So summoning courage a query to frame,
I boldly inquired, "You there, what name?"
Which, to supply explanation due,
Is the *Lingua-Nigra* for "Who are you?"

This is what followed—a grinding noise,
A friction of bones that grew to a voice;
And a slight elevation I certainly saw
Of the skull as if raised on the under jaw;
And this time beyond the chance of mistake,
My senses about me, and wide-awake,
No victim of frenzy, no fancy's gull,
I heard the words—"Me King Billy's Skull!"

Alas, poor Billy, I knew him well,
In his full corporeal *personnel*,
But a man might give his own father the go-by,
Were there only his brain-pan left to know by.
And this was Billy! the last of his race!
That sightless mask was his regal face!

How oft from the cavity within
 Those fangs now set in ghastly grin,
 Had I seen the curling smoke proceed
 Of the eleemosynary weed—
 A cavity even now displayed
 Through a gap for his pipe expressly made !

Here, where the Kingly glance shot through,
 Two eyeless sockets appal the view ;
 And where flourished the fibre of Cocoa-nut
 Is an utterly towless occiput !—
 But scant was the time to moralize,
 For soon a light in the place of the eyes,
 A wild looking, diabolical spark,
 Like the eye of an angry cat in the dark,
 Came and went, and went and came—
 The spirit of Billy, perhaps, a flame :
 And deeming it such, "What would you, pray ?"
 I asked in a stammering, tremulous way ;
 "What is your will, oh, William, say ?
 William, rex dei gratia !"

This is what followed,—a grinding noise,
 A friction of bones that grew to a voice ;
 "You take me out go long o'street
 You come place where three road meet
 S'pos'n keep middle till come to bridge

Cross over creek, an' go up ridge
 Up on 'im top lie down hollow tree
 Lift up big sheet o' bark you see
 Bones of brother belongin' to me
 Take 'im up head put mine fella down
 You fetch 'im brother head back to town
 Put 'im in box lock 'im up like o' here
 Dash no do *me!* . . . my oath! No fear!"

What COULD it all mean? — Three days ago
 I had seen this monarch in earth laid low :
 How had his fleshless skull returned
 From the grave where I saw him so "quietly inurned?"
 And what upon earth was the drift of the dark
 Allusion to Dash in his closing remark?
 And what could import a mission so strange—
 This visit to death, this mysterious exchange?
 And wherefore of all men should *I* be selected
 To pending an answer I did as directed,
 And in less than an hour the exchange was effected.
 King Billy supplanted, the box closed once more,
 And myself fleeing forth from the surgery door!

Time and the hour, as Shakespeare says,
 Run through the very roughest of days :—
 (Forgive misquotation—the letter kills ;
 The spirit, at all events, is Will's)
 Time and the hour having run their race,

I found myself back in the self-same place,
Dash standing by with a smiling face,
Wiping his weapon with dainty grace,
Myself no longer a surgical case,
But relieved (to the tune of twenty bob),
With the molar transferred to my trouser fob.
I could now look around me ; the box was there,
Done up in canvas, and labelled "with care ;"
And Dash, beholding my steadfast stare,
Said with Mephistophelian grin,
That looked like the very triumph of gin,
"Bet you twenty to one in gold,
You never will guess what that box doth hold . . .
Not bet? . . . Well, listen while I unfold
A neat little tale of a neat little prank,
Played by myself upon Doctor Blank,
The Hospital Surgeon, who, as you know,
Is my open friend, but my secret foe.
Well, to begin *ab initio*,
King Billy whom we saw laid low
In his mother earth some days ago,
The last of the Aborigines,
Had long been dying of lung disease.
The melancholy fact was known
To Doctor Blank and myself alone,
And each of us watched with wary eye,
Patiently waiting till Billy should die."

(Here I ventured to ask him the reason why.)
“Why? Don't you see? this man, as the last
Of a great island race of the perished past—
(Save one old gin, from whom can be
No further scion, as all can see)
Is a wonderful curiosity :
And Blank and myself had sworn an oath,
Secret from each, yet known to both,
To achieve some scientific note
In catalogue or anecdote,
By the munificent presentation
Of King Billy's Skull to the British Nation !
Fancy the honour, the kudos, the fame !
A whole museum athrill with one's name.
Fancy the thousands all crowding to see
'Skull of the last Aborigine,
Presented by Asterisk Dash, M.D.?!'
A couple of men not sufficing to fix
The numbers on all the umbrellas and sticks,
And every voice in the eager crowd
Pronouncing the name of Dash aloud !
Fancy the honour, the kudos, the fame !
But fancy the everlasting shame,
If in place of Dash the name should be Blank !
The Quack ! the Charlatan ! Mountebank !

But to proceed. To daily view
Weaker and weaker His Majesty grew.

I tended him kindly, went out of my way
To see how he fared from day to day :
But all my kindness, in pill or potion,
Showed small by the side of Blank's devotion ;
All my kindness in potion and pill
Only made Blank show kinder still.
Well, one dark day (which ill betide)
Returning home from a country ride,
I found, to my sore astonishment,
That Blank had had the patient sent
To the Hospital Nigger-ward—to die
Beneath my antagonist's very eye !
(Knew you ever such treachery !)—
I owe him one, to myself I said ;
Let him have the body, I'll have the head,
By hook or by crook, let what will come—
By fair or by foul, I'll have my thumb
On that potentate's caput mortuum !
I bribed a wardsman to let me know
When the patient should be *in articulo* ;
And, accordingly, one afternoon I got
A letter to say King Billy was not.
I suddenly found I had been remiss
In my social duties to Blank, and this
Induced me to write him to give us to tea
The pleasure of his company.
Blank took the bait, came, found—not me,

But himself alone with Mrs. D.,
Who very much regretted to say
How the Doctor was suddenly called away,
Much, to be sure, against his will,
But Mrs. . . . a . . . Harris was very ill :—
In an hour or so he would return :—
Edith, tell Mary to bring the urn.

Ere Blank sat down with my woman-kind,
I had slit Billy's head above and behind.
When Blank was requested to say a grace,
There was no skull behind Billy's face.
When Blank was just about to begin,
One skull was out and another skull in.
Ere Blank had buttered a morsel of toast,
The job was three-quarters through almost.
Ere Blank had sipped of his second cup,
The flesh was spliced, and the head tied up :
And before he had drunk it to the dregs,
I had done him, as sure as eggs are eggs !

And he knows it too ; but, all the same,
He hasn't blown it as yet for shame.
Let him publish it now as soon as he may,
He will find himself rather late in the day,
For this very night the treasure will be
Severed from Blank by leagues of sea.

Think of it, Sir, and congratulate me—
 'Skull of the last Aborigine,
 Presented by Asterisk Dash, M.D.'!!"

* * * * *

In a certain Museum, I won't say where,
 But it's not very far from Russell Square,
 Should the gentle Reader e'er happen to see
 "Skull of the last Aborigine,"—
 And find, perchance, some poetical gull
 Crooning the theme of a Monarch's skull,
 Tell him to lay his theme on a shelf,
 On peril of being a numskull himself;
 Or to modulate his Parnassian whim
 To the tune of "Brother belongin' to him."!!

MACAULAY'S NEW ZEALANDER.

IT little profits that, an idle man,
 On this worn arch, in sight of wasted halls,
 I mope, a solitary pelican,

And glower and glower for ever on Saint Paul's :—
 Will no soft-hearted mortal be so very
 Obliging as to row me o'er the ferry?

Here three-and-thirty years* I've stood estranged,
A dream of ruin all around me stretching ;
And centuries shall see me yet unchanged,
Ever in act to sketch, but nothing sketching ;
Mutely immutable, constrain'dly still,
With nought to stand against, except my will.

A wondrous lot is mine ; ye bide your doom
Till men say Vixit : mine begins ere birth ;
A lonely ghost projected from the womb
Of Time-to-come, I linger now on earth.
Ye vertebrates date back, while I commence
My weary present in the future tense.

A weird eidolon ; a born paradox ;
A fixture framed of incorporeal particles ;
Yet dropped in many an Editorial box,
Blown thence in squibs, or hurled in Leading Articles ;
A Nomad, though my permanent address is
In Volume Second of Macaulay's Essays.

I was not born of woman (see Macduff—
Nor stare to hear my lore so far extends ;
The sire who bore me trafficked in such stuff,
And had his Shakespeare at his finger-ends :
The quitch is in the blood—such blood as ghost has ;
I know as much as he ; at least, almost as).

* Macaulay's New Zealander dates from 1840.

I was not born of woman ; gave no pain ;
 Through no preliminary stage did pass ;
 But sprang, a Pallas, from Macaulay's brain,
 Though not, like her, with spear and helm of brass ;
My spear, a pencil of Queensland plumbago ;
My casque, a felt one—latest from Otago.

And therein lies the sting of all I bear—
 That after brooding ages on mine arch,
 And treasuring what the centuries prepare,
 And noting what ye proudly term the March
 Of Progress, and assimilating all
 “ The long result of Time,” from Locksley-hall ;—

That after seeing all that mortal can,
 That after learning all that man can learn,
 This forecast shade, already more than man,
 Must go and be a baby in its turn !
 I've got to go and be a little kid,
 When old perhaps as Cheops' Pyramid !

I've got to wear a little purfled cap ;
 Pass through, perchance, some brutal mode of
 swaddling ;
 To gather tissue from a bowl of pap ;
 To undergo no end of molly-coddling ;
 To be brought up by hand, or, worse and worse,
 To be a parasite upon a nurse.

And in due course this cultured soul of mine
Must learn its Catechism by easy stages ;
And sundry rods shall yet be steeped in brine,
To stimulate the heir of all the ages ;
And men shall file away with prose and rhyme
To sharpen *me*, the foremost file of time.

I pray you, purist, faint not at the word ;
For in the distant day whereof I speak,
Your chastened phrases shall be held absurd ;
What you call slang shall be our Attic Greek ;
And every man be file, or bloke, or cove ;
And bloods make oath by Gum, instead of Jove !

For standing here, immovable and dumb,
An arch-Stylites, birth, not death, awaiting,
Faint inklings reach me of the time to come,
Beneath the loud To-day reverberating ;
And I could tell of things so strange and wild,
Your wisest don would feel himself a child ;—

Could show up many a now-belauded quackery ;
Could play the deuce with half your saints and sages ;
Could settle for you whether Boz or Thackeray
Shall be the admiration of the ages ;
And whether Morris, Swinburne, and Rossetti
Shall number with the great, or with the petty ;—

Could tell how empire shall have changed its place,
But must not "blow," *although* an Australasian ;
Could tell you which shall be the ruling race,
But may not shock the orthodox Caucasian,
Nor dare your curiosity assuage,
Lest I should make half-castes become the rage ; —

Could tell you quite a fairy tale of science,
And wonders in Political Economy,
That set your time-worn statutes at defiance,
And hold them out of date as Deuteronomy :
The darky, boss ; the trashy white, a "brudder ;"
Man at the prow, and woman at the rudder ;—

How all shall go by natural selection ;
No man allowed to live unless good-looking ;
How love shall vent itself in vivisection,
And charms be rated subsequent to cooking ;
How girls, instead of knitting sofa-covers,
Shall spend their leisure in tattooing lovers ;

And how magnetic belts with dazzling hues
Shall draw unwilling arms around the waist ;
How damsels to enhance their lips shall use
Odylic force condensed into a paste ;
And woo the bashful from his slow simplicity
With cakes of desiccated electricity ; —

How education, as a general rule,
Shall be conducted by familiar spirits ;
How "circles" shall be formed in every school,
And rappings shall reward superior merits ;
And how the spectroscope, applied to spectres,
Shall re-enact all history, on reflectors ;—

And how your vaunted patents and inventions
Shall be for playthings to the great hereafter ;
And all your philosophical pretensions
Be themes of inextinguishable laughter ;
Your engineering form for future times
The droll machinery of pantomimes.

Your steam—your boast ! What is it but a vapour ?
Or what more fleeting simile will do :
'Twill be effete as—let me see—what paper ?
Eureka !—say, the "Saturday Review !"
Whose name, indeed, shall live—simply because
These lines give token such a paper *was*.

For there be those whose memory shall rot,
And pass, and be as it had never been ;
Of such my famed progenitor's is not ;
Valhalla holds him in the high serene :—
My Prospero ! Oh may he prosper where he is,
Untouched by that unenviable caries !

For though I dumbly execrate the day
When first he chained me here, a lorn eidolon,
To be a literary popinjay,
And market-stock for every sucking Solon,
Be Hyperborean calm his long reward!
I'm proud of him ; you know, he was a lord.

Mundanes, I say Good-bye, as on ye march ;
I fain would shake your hands, but can't get at you,—
My prison-ruin waiting in the arch,
As in the marble waits the future statue.
I hate you, London-bridge ! And if Saint Paul is
A name I loathe, the fault is Lord Macauley's.

Witlings, a word : bring me no more to book ;
And take not any more my name in vain ;
Cast, if ye will, one final, loving look,
As upon one ye ne'er shall see again.
Behold me—let it be the last occasion—
Served up in verses for "The Australasian."

MELBOURNE, *January*, 1874.

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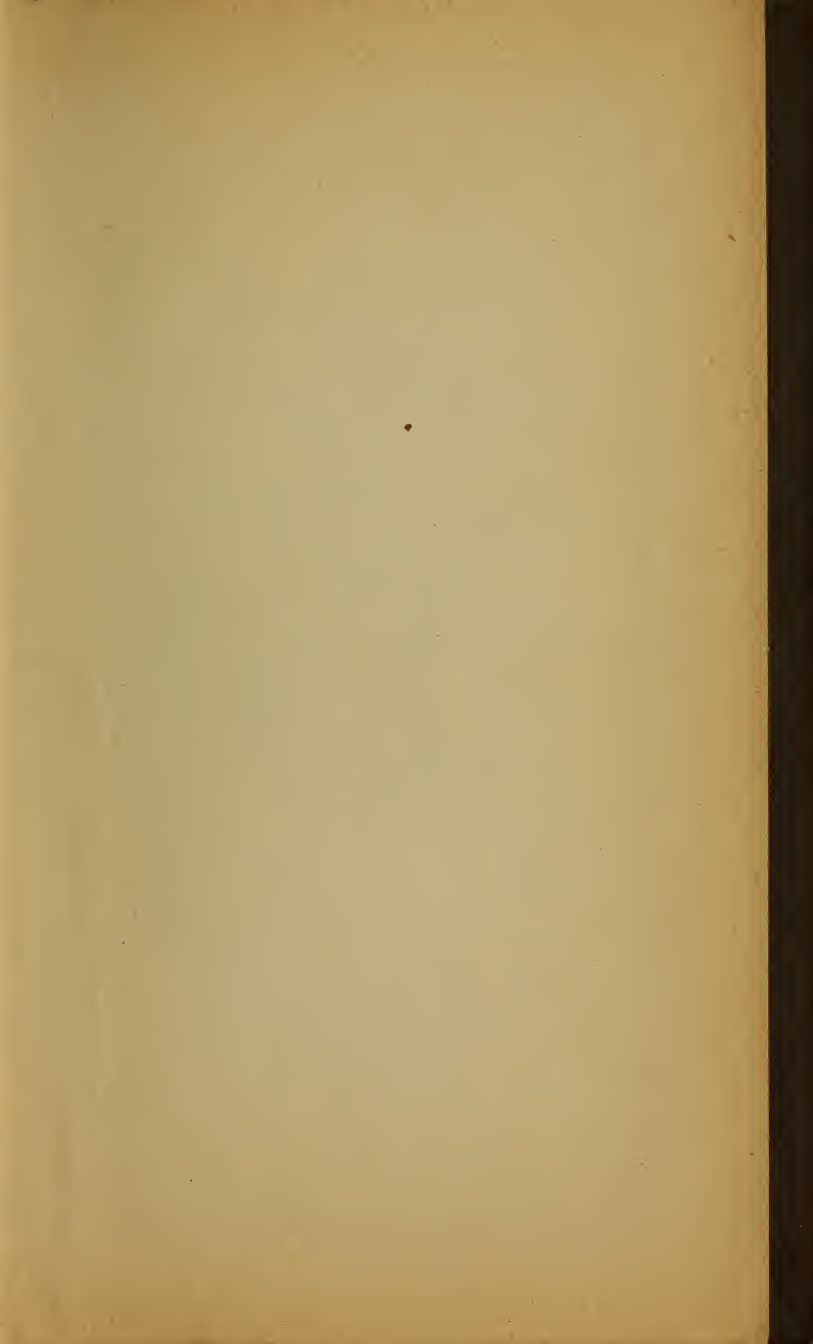
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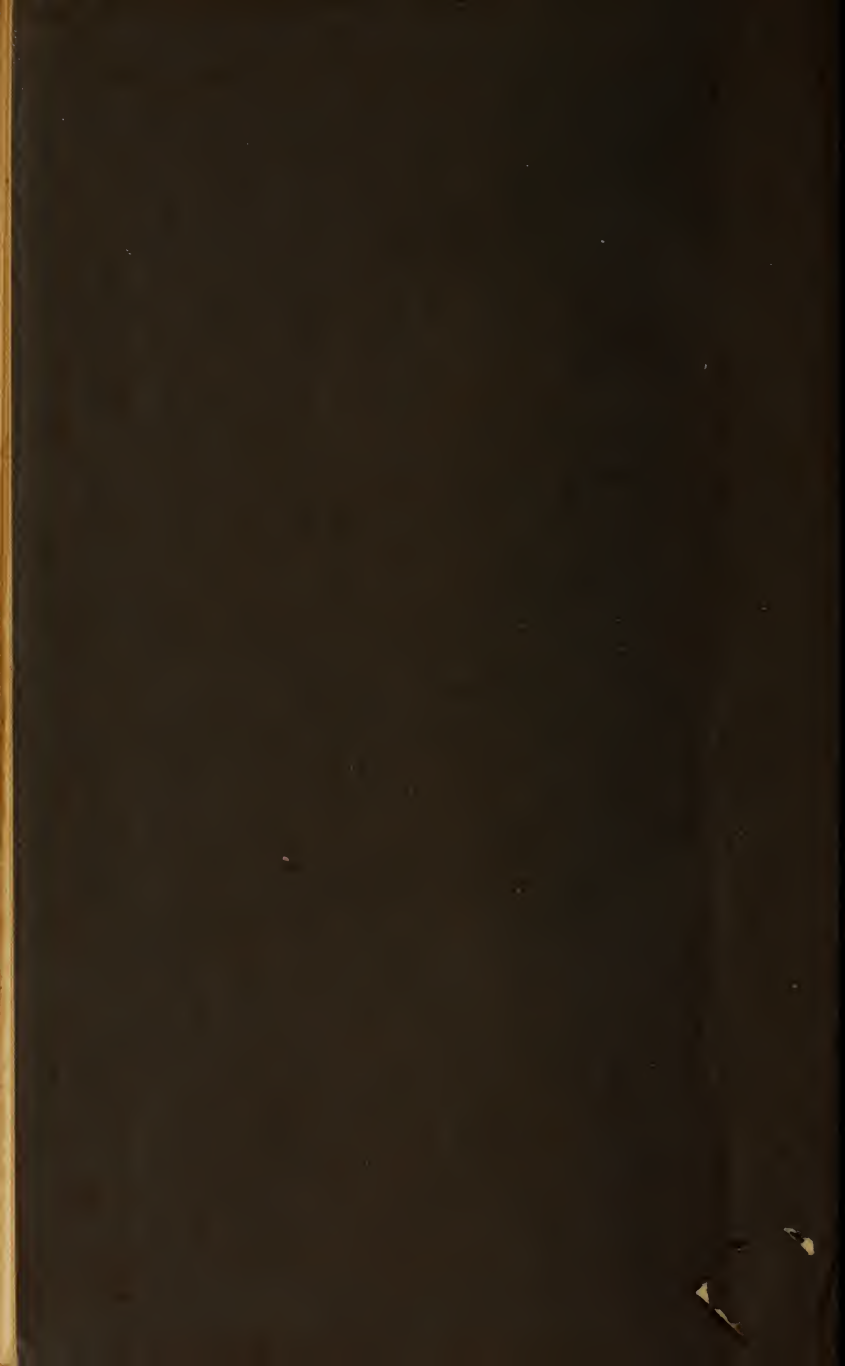
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